

Remarks

Specification

The terms “contact object memory” and “agent object memory” are objected to. MPEP 608.01(o) says that the meaning of every term used in any claim “should be apparent from the descriptive portion of the specification with clear disclosure as to its import”. It further notes that usually, the terminology of the original claims follows the nomenclature of the specification, but that objection can arise in amending the claims or adding new claims.

In the present case the terms objected to were present in the claims as filed, and they also find a clear basis in the specification in the first paragraph in the “Summary of the Invention”. The contact object memory is further supported by the disclosure in the drawings of memory areas A and B which are clearly disclosed to comprise contact objects (page 14, lines 14-15), and the agent object memory is further supported by the disclosure in the drawings of memory area C and the specification at page 14, lines 16-17.

In the light of these clear disclosures and the use of the terms in question in the same precise wording in the specification, Applicants submit that no objection arises. In the event that this objection is to be maintained, it is respectfully requested that further guidance be provided as to the nature of the objection.

Claim rejections 35 USC § 103

The Office Action acknowledges that Gagle fails to teach a number of the features of claim 1. In particular, the following features are acknowledged to be lacking from Gagle according to the Office Action:

- (i) the network comprising said plurality of contact centers does not require a central controller;

- (ii) said plurality of contact centers is further arranged such that, if there is a fault or a change of mode of operation at one of said plurality of contact centers, remaining ones of said plurality of contact centers continue to replicate and synchronize said contact objects ... at each of said remaining ones of the plurality of contact centers;
- (iii) said plurality of contact centers being arranged to replicate and synchronize said ... agent objects at each of the plurality of contact centers;
- (iv) said plurality of contact centers is further arranged such that, if there is a fault or a change of mode of operation at one of said plurality of contact centers, remaining ones of said plurality of contact centers continue to replicate and synchronize said ... agent objects at each of said remaining ones of the plurality of contact centers;

(Applicants recognize that there is an overlap and repetition of wording between (ii) and (iv), but this is necessary to set out in context the missing features, given that the Office Action relies on different references for the alleged disclosure of each of these features.)

A. Khan does not teach replicating contact objects as alleged

The Office Action argues that Khan teaches replication of contact objects between contact centers with no central controller, with reference to Khan's teaching that exclusion records and priority records are transferred between contact centers.

Applicants respectfully submit that this finding is incorrect for several reasons.

- Firstly, the transfer files of Khan are not "contact objects", and nor are the exclusion records or the priority records.
- Secondly, Applicants will demonstrate that the mechanism proposed by Khan inherently shows that Khan gave no consideration to replicating and synchronizing contact objects, and thus the skilled person would have had no reason or motivation whatsoever to make the alleged combination with Gagle.

- Thirdly, even if the suggested combination were made, the resultant system would not be capable of the claimed replication and synchronization.

As regards the first reason:

A “contact object” is defined within claim 1 by the phrase “contact objects each representing a different contact in the network of contact centers”. The specification furthermore defines the term as follows: *The term “contact object” is used to refer to a collection of information in a pre-specified format used to represent a contact present in the network of contact centers.* [page 9, lines 1-3]

The claimed invention is therefore concerned only with the replication and synchronization of contact objects which represent live contacts actually present in the network of contact centers.

Khan does not disclose the replication and synchronization of contact objects. Khan is concerned with the problems encountered when different contact centers, engaged in an outbound calling campaign, each maintain different exclusion lists, i.e. “do-not-call” lists containing the telephone numbers of customers who must not be called by the campaign’s automated diallers. The records propagated from one call center to another in the Khan system, therefore, are records of those numbers which must not be dialled.

As regards the second reason:

The suggestion made by Khan is that records are updated in a table for export from a call center, and that scripts operate to periodically copy a transfer file to a specified directory every 30 minutes or so [column 8, lines 6-22]. The receiving call center imports the records in the file by periodically (e.g. every 15 minutes or so) searching the specified directory and updating the entries in that file to its own exclusion list [column 8, lines 23-48].

Such a mechanism may be suited to keeping “do not call” exclusion lists sufficiently up to date to avoid problems, but is entirely ineffective to replicate and synchronize contact objects representing contacts present in a contact center. The state of contacts at a typical contact center will change hundreds if not thousands of times per second as new contacts arrive, old contacts leave, automated systems gather information and interact with the customers, contacts are assigned to queues, and agents transfer contacts, to give just a handful of examples that will occur constantly. Collecting these changes into a collective file and transferring this file every 30 minutes or so would be worse than useless and would serve no purpose as regards replication of contact objects. Clearly, therefore, Khan did not have any intention to replicate contact objects, and the skilled person looking at the Gagle system would never consider using the teaching of Khan as this is in no way related to the replication of contact objects.

As regards the third reason:

If the combination suggested by the Examiner were made it would not be able to achieve replication and synchronization of contact objects between contact centers since the timescale and manner of operation of Khan’s system is many orders of magnitude slower than would be required for effective synchronization of contacts.

B. Allen does not teach replicating agent objects as alleged

Even if the arguments set out above are not considered persuasive, there is a further and independent reason why the invention cannot be considered obvious over the alleged combination of Gagle, Khan and Allen. Independent consideration is therefore requested in relation to the following argument, the substance of which was presented previously but deemed moot in light of the new rejection.

The Office Action acknowledges that “Gagle and Khan do not explicitly teach agent objects being synchronized”, before continuing: “Allen does teach this limitation (paragraph 10) to select best-fit agent. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify Gagle with agent

object being synchronized to select the best fit agent for a call (paragraph 10, lines 15-16) as taught by Allen."

A mere assertion that Allen teaches synchronization of some sort would not provide the missing teaching without defining what Allen proposes to synchronize. Accordingly, Applicants would respectfully draw attention to the claim wording in relation to the requirement to synchronize agent objects. Claim 1 requires:

"a plurality of agent objects each representing a different agent in the network of contact centers, each of said plurality of agent objects comprising information representing a respective agent and its availability status"

This type of agent object is what must be synchronized, and it is acknowledged that Gagle does not make any suggestion of synchronizing and replicating such agent objects comprising such information.

Claim 1 also requires:

"said plurality of contact centers being arranged to replicate and synchronize said ... agent objects at each of the plurality of contact centers"; and
"said plurality of contact centers is further arranged such that, if there is a fault or a change of mode of operation at one of said plurality of contact centers, remaining ones of said plurality of contact centers continue to replicate and synchronize said ... agent objects at each of said remaining ones of the plurality of contact centers."

In paragraph 10, on which the Examiner relies on in this regard, Allen says the following:

In one embodiment of the present invention, there is a method for maintaining skills for agents of a contact center and synchronizing skills in a central

database with a routing system. Agent profiles may be stored in a central skill database for a set of agents. A skill-impacting system (such as an education system, a satisfaction system or a metrics system) may send skill/capability data for an agent. The agent's profile in the central skill database may be updated based on the received skill data. Either immediately or at a predetermined interval, the routing system may be synchronized with the new data in the central skill database. When the contact center receives a contact (such as a phone call, an email, a web chat, an instant message, or a fax) from a customer, processing logic in the routing system may select a best-fit agent based on availability and skill data from the agent profiles. Other embodiments of the present invention operate differently to synchronize skill data.

The sum total of Allen's teaching with regard to synchronization, therefore, is that agent skills are kept updated in an agent database within a contact center according to education, satisfaction ratings, or metrics. The routing system within a contact center is synchronized with this latest agent data. In this way, the best-fit agent is determined according to the most up-to-date agent profile.

Allen is entirely directed to the architecture and operation of a single contact center. There is no suggestion that a plurality of contact centers are arranged to replicate and synchronize agent objects at each of the plurality of contact centers, as is required by claim 1. In consequence, there is also no further arrangement, also required by claim 1 such that, if there is a fault or a change of mode of operation at one of said plurality of contact centers, remaining ones of said plurality of contact centers continue to replicate and synchronize said agent objects at each of said remaining ones of the plurality of contact centers.

Since these features are neither taught nor suggested by Allen, and as the synchronization of the routing system with the agent's profile in the skill database does not provide any relevant teaching regarding the replication and synchronization of agent objects across a plurality of contact centers, neither Gagle nor Allen, alone

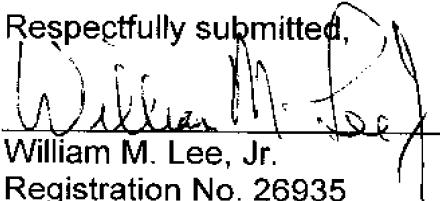
or in combination, can lead to the claimed invention. This argument, which is made in addition to and independently of the arguments relating to the combination of Gagle and Khan, and applies equally to the corresponding features of independent claims 7, 8 and 13.

Accordingly, for this additional reason, the combination of Gagle, Khan and Allen does not teach all of the limitations of claim 1 and the combination cannot result in the network arrangement defined by claim 1. Independent claims 7, 8 and 13 are generally consistent with the wording of claim 1 and thus the foregoing submissions are equally applicable thereto.

In view of the arguments made herein, the applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejections, and allow the application.

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